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Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
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Summary record of the 1247th meeting
Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 21 October 2014, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. Ameline

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention (*continued*)

Combined seventh and eighth periodic reports of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (CEDAW/C/VEN/7-8; CEDAW/C/VEN/Q/7-8; and Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, the delegation of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela took places at the Committee table.*

2. **Ms. Tarazón** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela), introducing the combined seventh and eighth periodic reports of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (CEDAW/C/VEN/7-8), said that one of the Government's main aims was to eradicate the vestiges of a patriarchal State that oppressed women. The Ministry of People's Power for Women and Gender Equality was established in 2009 under the leadership of the former President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Hugo Chávez. The mechanisms to increase women's participation in politics, various services for women and training programmes on gender equality had helped to enable women to exercise their rights. Much progress had been made in promoting women's rights despite constant attacks by national and foreign actors intent on disturbing the peace in the country. Under the leadership of President Chávez, local community councils and grass-roots movements had been created in an attempt to increase the participation of the people in public life. Currently, 55 per cent of community councils were led by women. Furthermore, an increasing number of women held decision-making posts in Government. Three of the five government branches were headed by women, namely the judicial, electoral and civic branches. The Ministry of People's Power for Women and Gender Equality had established numerous committees to promote gender equality and equity at the local level and a national advisory council representing around 500 women's movements and organizations that currently reported to the Office of the President.

3. In 2007, the parliament had adopted the Act on Women's Right to a Life Free from Violence, which drew upon the provisions of both the Convention and the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women. The Act classified violence against women as an offence against public order and provided for shelters for victims of gender-based violence, penalties for 19 forms of violence against women and specialized courts and prosecution services for cases of violence against women. Moreover, in August 2014, the National Assembly had introduced amendments to the Act to include the crimes of femicide, aggravated femicide and incitement to suicide as extreme forms of gender-based violence. The National Institute for Women had set up legal and psychological services, shelters and a confidential 24 hour emergency hotline for vulnerable women.

4. The Government had given effect to the Committee's recommendation that it should devise a plan of action to mainstream a gender perspective at all levels and in all areas by adopting the Mamá Rosa Gender Equality and Equity Plan (2013–2019). The Plan had been discussed on a number of occasions with women from various walks of life. A total of 3,000 proposals had been received and taken into account when finalizing the Plan. The Plan included the following strategic objectives: to increase women's participation in political life; to increase women's participation in the new socialist economy; to include women in all Government social programmes; to eradicate violence against women; and to raise the awareness of all sectors of society about gender perspectives. Furthermore, the Government required all State institutions to include at least one programme aimed at mainstreaming a gender perspective in their annual plans. The budget of the Ministry of People's Power for Women and Gender Equality had more than doubled between 2011 and 2014.

5. The Government had followed up on the Committee's recommendation that it should take measures to address gender stereotypes by establishing an agency to monitor sexist or discriminatory content in the media in cooperation with women's organizations. The Government had also organized a number of workshops to provide training on gender equality, mainstreaming gender perspectives and preventing gender-based violence. Since 2013, almost 342,000 people had benefited from that training. The Government had focused its efforts on ensuring that boys and girls could access the education system on an equal footing. The primary school attendance rate was currently only slightly higher for boys than for girls while the secondary school attendance rate was currently higher for girls than for boys, which indicated that the Government had made significant progress in eliminating gender disparities in education. In addition, a number of textbooks now covered topics such as sexual identity, gender and sexual and reproductive rights.

6. The Government had adopted a series of programmes to remedy the problem of early pregnancy, which included the national plan to protect women's sexual and reproductive rights for the period 2014–2019. Female unemployment had fallen from 16 per cent in 1999 to 7.5 per cent in 2014. More than 2.5 million people were receiving a regular pension, of whom 58 per cent were women. Moreover, of the more than 213,000 people working in the informal sector who had been registered with social security services, 60 per cent were women. Under the Labour Act, parental leave had been increased for breastfeeding and prenatal and postnatal care and expectant mothers were afforded protection against dismissal during pregnancy and the first two years of the child's life. Sexual harassment in the workplace was also a criminal offence punishable by the Code.

7. The National Institute of Statistics had published gender-disaggregated data on education, income, employment and health in 2011, 2012 and 2013 with a view to a better assessment of the impact of policies and programmes on women and would include indicators on gender-based violence for 2014.

8. **Ms. Zuleta de Merchán** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that the Act on Women's Right to a Life Free from Violence had been adopted to help guarantee women and girls full enjoyment of their rights. The 1999 Constitution provided that international human rights instruments had constitutional status and prevailed over domestic legislation. The Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court of Justice recognized the primacy of such instruments and had issued a ruling establishing the competence of specialized courts to deal with cases involving violence against women and trafficking in women and girls. The Government was in the process of repealing outdated laws containing discriminatory provisions. For example, the minimum age for marriage was currently set at 16 years of age for both boys and girls and the Constitutional Chamber had recommended that it should be raised to 18 years of age. The National Gender Justice Commission was responsible for overseeing judges dealing with cases of gender-based violence. Those judges received continuous training. In the parts of the country where courts with special jurisdiction over gender-based violence had not yet been established, municipal courts dealt with the cases. The Government also intended to establish such courts in border areas in an attempt to combat trafficking in women and girls, which was prevalent in those areas. To date, more than half the number of cases brought before those courts had been resolved. Furthermore, the Criminal Code provided that judges competent to deal with cases of gender-based violence could also hear cases involving such violence committed abroad when the victim and the perpetrator were both Venezuelan nationals.

Articles 1 to 6

9. **Ms. Pimentel** asked what progress had been made to date in reforming the Criminal Code; what were the main obstacles to that process; and when the bill on the right of women to gender equality and equity and the bill on trafficking in persons would be

adopted. She requested specific data on the impact of the various policies and programmes for the advancement of women carried out by the State party. She also asked whether the National Gender Justice Commission functioned effectively and how the State party measured the impact of its policies and programmes aimed at affording women access to justice.

10. **Ms. Bareiro-Bobadilla** said that, despite the prohibition of gender discrimination and guarantees of equality before the law under the Constitution, and the efforts at legal reform, laws that discriminated against women were still in force in the country. She asked whether the State party had made a comprehensive list of all such laws and what progress it had made in repealing them.

11. **Ms. Pires** said that the State party had failed to include gender-disaggregated statistical data on the impact of its policies and programmes in both rural and urban areas in its periodic report as the Committee had requested and had only specified the number of women who had benefited from those policies and programmes. She requested additional information on the impact of the Juana Ramírez la Avanzadora Equality Plan 2009–2013 and how its results had affected the Mamá Rosa Gender Equality and Equity Plan (2013–2019). She wished to know whether each policy and programme adopted included a monitoring and evaluation plan and whether the State party had considered developing verifiable indicators for measuring the impact of such policies and programmes. Lastly, she enquired as to whether women's organizations were consulted as a matter of course on national policies and programmes concerning women.

12. **Ms. Tarazón** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that numerous committees on women and gender equality had been set up within community councils to provide women with an opportunity to meet and discuss policies and programmes concerning them. Women's organizations also provided input into regional policies and programmes concerning women. The national advisory council worked closely with the Ministry of People's Power for Women and Gender Equality and reported directly to the Office of the President on policies and programmes concerning women.

13. **Mr. Devoe** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that work to develop a comprehensive nationwide data-collection system was ongoing. Building on the various initiatives described in the report and the replies to the list of issues, in June 2014 the Government had begun designing a national system for following up on treaty body recommendations which would encompass over 150 quantitative and qualitative indicators. The National Council for Human Rights, established in April 2014 to serve as a policy coordination and oversight body, would monitor those indicators on a regular and systematic basis with a view to identifying gaps and measuring progress.

14. **Ms. Hernández Royett** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that an anti-trafficking bill was still at its first reading but that the trafficking and smuggling of women and children was already expressly criminalized in other legislation. Legal support and other assistance for victims had been greatly improved, and a robust system of protection was clearly delineated in article 2 of the Act on Women's Right to a Life Free from Violence. Responding to the concerns raised about the lack of appropriate administrative measures to support the legislative efforts, she drew the Committee's attention to the recently launched training and awareness-raising programmes for public-sector employees. The programmes targeted providers of services to victims of violence, inter alia, and advocated a caring and compassionate approach.

15. **Mr. Zapata** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that a wide-ranging review of the nation's social values had provided the impetus to develop new mechanisms for delivering gender equality and make the construction of a fair and equalitarian society one of the core objectives of the socialist economic development plan for 2013–2019. The bill

on gender equality and equity was one of several in the pipeline that would help the Government to achieve that goal. Following consultations with the Ministry for Women, the Ministry for Education and civil society organizations, an updated draft of that bill, which envisaged the creation of various new institutions, including a national advisory council for women, was due to be considered by the National Assembly in the near future.

16. **Ms. Bareiro-Bobadilla** said that most of the aforementioned reforms had been covered in the report. What she wished to know was the reason for the delays in the comprehensive review needed to identify and repeal the numerous discriminatory provisions in national law that had still not been aligned with the Constitution, over 15 years since its enactment, and when all the required amendments would be completed.

17. **Ms. Pimentel** sought the delegation's comments on reports from alternative sources, which indicated that dialogue with women's associations was limited to government-sponsored groups only, to the exclusion of independent NGOs.

18. **The Chairperson**, speaking as an expert, asked what was being done to reinforce the rule of law in general and the situation of women in prisons in particular.

19. **Ms. Zuleta de Merchán** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that certain key pieces of Venezuelan legislation, including the Criminal Code, dated back well over 50 years and thus contained a number of provisions that were certainly outdated, if not sexist. However, through its case law, the Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court was driving a comprehensive review and reform of all provisions deemed to run counter to the Constitution. Judges were expressly trained to identify such provisions, and could refuse to apply them, with the result that discriminatory articles were annulled in practice even if not officially repealed. For example, the criminal provisions which rendered women who committed adultery liable to imprisonment but established no equivalent penalties for male adulterers had been definitively annulled in 2006, as had the provisions that exonerated perpetrators of sexual assault who subsequently married their victims.

20. Although the Supreme Court's case law was central to the legislative reform process, its powers were limited to declarations of unconstitutionality and unenforceability. Thus, while the Constitutional Chamber had been able to use arguments of discrimination and unconstitutionality to support a de facto increase in the minimum marriageable age for girls from 14 to 16 years, in line with the equivalent age for boys, it could not formally repeal the existing provisions and introduce a new minimum age; the corresponding legislative amendments would have to await parliamentary approval.

21. The remit of the National Gender Justice Commission included reviewing the role of judges, particularly in cases involving violence against women, and advising the Supreme Court on their appointment and removal and how to maintain an appropriate gender balance. The Commission was composed of one representative of each of the six chambers of the Supreme Court and, at present, had an exemplary 50:50 gender split. Women were well represented in the judiciary in general, outnumbering men overall and accounting for nearly half of all Supreme Court judges.

22. Access to justice for women was facilitated by the availability of first instance judges empowered to hear domestic violence cases in circuit courts in 16 states. There were 2 appellate courts and a further 14 specialized courts were planned. In the meantime, where there was no specialized court nearby, local municipal judges were also competent to preside over first instance hearings in cases of violence against women.

23. **Ms. Neubauer** said that the examples of affirmative action cited in section 4 of the report suggested that the meaning and scope of temporary special measures were still not properly understood by the State party, despite the observations and recommendations made by the Committee in its concluding comments to the previous periodic report. For

example, the preferential credit schemes mentioned were available to both men and women while support programmes for teenage mothers and pregnant teenagers were general policy measures, not measures of a temporary special nature. She wished to know about any efforts to enhance understanding among parliamentary bodies, government officials and other relevant actors of the meaning and scope of temporary special measures, as interpreted in general comment No. 25, and thus to ensure a clear distinction between general social and economic policies which benefited women and temporary special measures under article 4 of the Convention.

24. She also wished to know how the Government monitored the implementation and success of the measures reported as temporary special measures and ensured that the results yielded were sustainable, and whether temporary special measures were considered an appropriate means to address issues affecting other categories of women, such as older women, women with disabilities, migrant women and women in prostitution.

25. **Ms. Hayashi**, referring to shadow reports of incidents of rape and assault of female prisoners, asked for details of the criminal penalties imposed on perpetrators and the reparation available for victims. She also wished to know: the geographical distribution of the shelters for victims of domestic violence mentioned in the opening statement; the number of women they could cater for; whether NGOs were involved in their operation and, if so, whether the Government provided them with sufficient financial and human resources; whether the provisions of the Criminal Code which granted impunity to perpetrators of violence against women who married their victims had been officially repealed, in line with the 2009 recommendation of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights; and what measures were in place to prevent violence against women, including women who were abused by their partners.

26. **Ms. Pimentel**, lamenting the persistence of negative gender stereotypes in the Venezuelan media despite the State party's commendable legislative efforts, asked what strategies were being used to further the fight against that continuing scourge and whether any targeted campaigns to combat negative portrayals of the lesbian community were under way or envisaged. With regard to violence against women, she wished to know: whether the Government planned to review the Act on Women's Right to a Life Free from Violence to extend its protection to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) persons; whether free legal assistance was available for all women who were unable to afford counsel; whether accurate national statistics attesting to the proportion of reported cases that resulted in prosecutions and convictions were available; whether remedies were available; and, if so, how often they were granted.

27. **Ms. Jahan**, noting that trafficking in women and girls was reported to have reached worrying levels, particularly in the tourist centres so important to the State party's economy, sought an update on the time frame for adoption of the anti-trafficking bill, together with assurances that its content was gender-sensitive and compliant with the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (Palermo Protocol). She also sought information about: the review of the national plan of action to combat trafficking; the financial and human resources allocated to the government agency responsible for coordinating anti-trafficking efforts; the evaluation mechanisms used to monitor the success of those efforts; the gender component of prevention and victim support programmes; the role of NGOs in running those programmes; and what was being done to facilitate the identification of trafficking victims among vulnerable population groups and address the dearth of comprehensive victim support services, including the lack of a dedicated shelter for trafficking victims.

28. Lastly, she invited the delegation to explain the marked reduction in the number of trafficking cases between 2007 and 2010 suggested by the figures cited in the report, noting

with concern that under-reporting or inadequate record keeping were more likely causes than a genuine decline; to indicate whether the comprehensive assessment of the causes and extent of prostitution called for in the Committee's previous concluding comments had been conducted; and to confirm that all necessary safeguards were in place to protect women and girls from exploitation through sex tourism.

29. **Ms. Yekuna Martínez** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that, as required under the Constitution, the Government of Venezuela endeavoured to ensure that consultation processes were participatory and open to all sectors of society, including women's NGOs. Unfortunately, opposition party supporters and a number of prominent women's groups had declined to attend a recent conference for peace and life despite a personal invitation from the President. Nonetheless, after years of exclusion and discrimination, Venezuelan women were beginning to achieve significant levels of participation in the executive branch, the legislature and, most significantly, the more than 44,000 local community councils. In addition, the President had recently announced that the ruling party would adopt alternating lists for the forthcoming elections with a view to achieving greater gender parity in political office.

30. Negative media stereotyping and its effects were addressed in two laws – the Act on Social Responsibility in Radio and Television and the Act on Women's Right to a Life Free from Violence. To support the legislative effort, the Ministry of People's Power for Women and Gender Equality had established the Carmen Clemente Travieso Media Observatory, to which interested parties were urged to report any discriminatory, stereotypical or violent content disseminated in the private media. The Government was mindful of the need not to infringe on freedom of expression but likewise anxious to ensure that all flagrant violations of the framework for the protection of women were eliminated.

31. There were currently some 4,200 women deprived of their liberty in 43 detention facilities across the country, including women's prison wings and judicial and pretrial detention centres. The recently established Ministry of People's Power for Prison Affairs and the Ministry of People's Power for Women and Gender Equality were working together to improve conditions and guarantee respect for the human rights of those women, and there was a programme for the protection of the rights of women deprived of their liberty and of female relatives of prisoners. As part of that programme, women deprived of their liberty were being included in the Flora Tristán national social care system and childcare centres were being created for their children. Training was provided to women on issues such as violence against women and sexual and reproductive rights. An interministerial programme was in place to provide dental, gynaecological and psychological care to women in detention facilities. Part of the Women's Development Fund had been allocated to social and economic empowerment projects for detained women.

32. **Mr. Devoe** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that guaranteeing the rights of persons deprived of their liberty, particularly women, had been one of the most difficult challenges faced when the revolution had begun in 1999. Since then, constant efforts, including training and restructuring of the prison system, had been made to ensure the full respect of rights in prison facilities. The State had a clear policy of zero tolerance of violations of human rights. The repressive system under the previous regime had been successfully dismantled and violations by prison officials were now duly investigated and sanctioned.

33. **Ms. Zuleta de Merchán** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that there was indeed a system of free legal aid for female victims of violence, in accordance with the Act on Women's Right to a Life Free from Violence. A group of special defence lawyers had been set up under the Ministry of People's Power for Women and Gender Equality to assist women victims. Efforts were being made to combat impunity in relation to gender-based violence. For example, victims could now bring a case before the courts themselves without

the assistance of the Public Prosecution Service if the Service did not bring an indictment against the perpetrator within four months. Many victims had availed themselves of that opportunity. With regard to the results to promote the participation of women in the judiciary, as at May 2014, there had been a total of 2,005 judges in the country, 1,304 of whom were women and 701 men.

34. Combating stereotypes was one of the most difficult policy measures to implement because sexist images of women were widely used in the tabloid press to attract male readers and generate revenue. It was thus difficult to combat gender stereotypes without bankrupting the newspapers. Nonetheless, legal action had been taken against certain newspapers; one such example was the case against the *Diario Meridiano*, in which the Constitutional Chamber had made an order prohibiting the national daily from publishing advertisements with explicit sexual content.

35. **Ms. Tarazón** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela), referring to the adoption of special temporary measures to support gender equality, said that one of the most important policies in that regard was the integration of women into social programmes, primarily those aimed at eradicating poverty and the feminization of poverty. The Neighbourhood Mothers and Sons and Daughters of Venezuela missions provided important temporary protection measures to enable women to progress towards financial independence and improved quality of life. Some 460,000 women nationwide were receiving financial assistance and health and education support under those programmes. The establishment of the Women's Development Bank had marked another major step forward in that regard. Given that one of the ongoing challenges was the mainstreaming of gender perspectives, recent measures adopted by the President to include equity and equality criteria in a number of social programmes were to be welcomed. The recently established Community Development Bank would allocate 50 per cent of funds for the economic empowerment of women. The decentralization of the Mamá Rosa Gender Equality and Equity Plan had resulted in the introduction of gender-sensitive budgets in governors' offices and local authorities throughout the country.

36. **Ms. Hernández Royett** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that the recently established national office against organized crime and the financing of terrorism was the focal point for designing strategies to deal with trafficking. However, pursuant to a recent judgement by the Constitutional Chamber, the Ministry of People's Power for Women and Gender Equality and the National Institute for Women were now responsible for overseeing the protection and care of women and girls. A memorandum of understanding had been concluded with Brazil and efforts were under way to set up a comprehensive care and training centre at the border, with a focus on victims of trafficking in women and girls. There were also plans to set up a special court. There were six specialized shelters for victims of trafficking nationwide. The National Office for Women's Rights provided legal assistance and support to women at the national level, without any form of discrimination.

37. With regard to prostitution, the State had ratified non-binding and binding international instruments, such as the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and the International Labour Organization Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (No. 182). In Venezuela, forced prostitution and sexual exploitation were crimes under the Act on Women's Right to a Life Free from Violence. Efforts were being made to develop an inter-institutional approach to dealing with the interrelated problems of forced prostitution and trafficking in women.

38. **Ms. Zuleta de Merchán** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that the 2011 Organized Crime and Financing of Terrorism Act covered trafficking in persons and reproduced part of the Act on Women's Right to a Life Free from Violence, which had been the first law to specifically criminalize trafficking in women. There were currently 14

cases involving trafficking before the special courts on gender violence. However, some private defence counsels had requested to have the cases heard under the jurisdiction of the ordinary courts. In a recent judgement, the Constitutional Chamber had ruled, on the basis of the Convention, that the special courts had jurisdiction over such cases if the victims were women or children. Victims received better treatment in the special courts, as they had interdisciplinary teams of professionals trained to deal with such difficult cases.

39. **Ms. Pimentel** asked whether the legal prohibition of trafficking covered all aspects of the crime, in accordance with international standards. For example, was demand by clients for adolescents and girls specifically criminalized? She wished to know whether there was any partnership between the academic and political communities on policy development.

40. **Ms. Jahan** welcomed the fact that, since the State party's universal periodic review in 2012, progress had been made in developing an anti-trafficking bill. She wondered whether that bill was sufficiently gender-sensitive and provided for sufficient protection for women victims. She asked whether the six shelters mentioned were exclusively for victims of trafficking or whether they were also open to victims of gender violence. She wondered how the court order prohibiting the advertising of prostitution services in the national press was being enforced.

41. **Ms. Ye'kuna Martínez** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that all sectors of public life, particularly those that had historically fought for the protection of women's rights, were involved in gender equality policy work. The Ministry of People's Power for Women and Gender Equality maintained important links with female Venezuelan academics, who actively participated in designing, implementing and monitoring policies.

42. **Ms. Tarazón** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that the recently established Argelia Laya Polytechnic University provided a forum for participation and exchange with the academic world. The Ministry of People's Power for Women and Gender Equality was building an alliance with the National Council of Universities in order to develop joint projects with universities. The Ombudsman's Office also provided the Ministry with the results of its research.

43. **Ms. Zuleta de Merchán** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that the Constitutional Chamber regularly called on specialists, including academics, to give expert testimony, for example in cases related to family and indigenous rights. With regard to the order on the prohibition of advertising sexual services, failure to comply with the order would result in arrest. It was difficult to legislate on the issue without being challenged by the media.

Articles 7 to 9

44. **Ms. Neubauer** commended the State party on the progress made in improving the participation of women in public and political life. However, she wished to clarify a number of inconsistencies. For example, she would be interested to know why the number of women in the National Assembly had increased by 8 per cent in 2005 but had then decreased slightly in 2010 and what additional measures were being envisaged to achieve parity in elected and appointed office. She asked whether political parties had their own internal quota rules and what was the percentage of women in decision-making positions in the main political parties. It appeared that the number of women in the cabinet had decreased between March 2012 and January 2014, and now only 4 of 31 ministerial positions were held by women, which indicated that the policy approach did not ensure the sustainability of the results achieved. She would be interested to hear how the representation and participation of indigenous women and women of African descent was addressed.

45. **Ms. Bareiro-Bobadilla**, referring to article 9, noted that there were no contradictions between the constitutional provisions on citizenship and the Convention, but asked whether, in practice, there was a good system of birth registration, particularly in border and indigenous areas and for the children of Venezuelans born abroad.

46. **Ms. Tarazón** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that the aim was to ensure that at least 30 per cent of seats in the National Assembly were occupied by women by 2015.

47. **Ms. Yekuna Martínez** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that the United Socialist Party (PSUV), the country's main political party, was the only one to have complied with the resolution of the National Electoral Council on the principle of parity. The delegation called on the Committee to support efforts to guarantee that all political parties respected that principle. The bill on gender equality that was currently under consideration provided for the principle of gender parity in all political organizations. The percentage of women in the National Assembly currently stood at 17 per cent. Four of the country's 23 governors and 16 per cent of mayors were women. The Ombudsman's Office, the Attorney-General's Office and the Office of the Comptroller-General were all headed by women. Efforts were being made to improve the representation of women in traditionally male-dominated sectors, such as the military, and a woman had recently been named Minister of Defence and Admiral in Chief.

48. **Ms. Tarazón** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that the President was encouraging ministers to appoint female deputy ministers. Major efforts were being made to increase the number of women and young people in decision-making positions. Gender parity would not be achieved in the short term, and it was therefore natural for there to be slight fluctuations from year to year until that goal was attained.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.